

Written testimony of Lisa M. Ryan-Boyle of Darien, Connecticut
Before the Connecticut General Assembly
Environmental Committee, March 1, 2010

Testimony in Support of
House Bill 5126, An Act Establishing a Chemical Innovations Institute at the
University of Connecticut;
House Bill 5130, An Act Concerning Child Safe Products

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and honorable members of the
Environmental Committee,

My name is Lisa Ryan-Boyle and I am a resident of Darien. I am writing because I strongly support **HB 5126**, An Act Establishing a Chemical Innovations Institute at the University of Connecticut, and **HB 5130**, An Act Concerning Child Safe Products.

Both bills address issues of great interest to me as an individual, as a parent and generally as a citizen concerned for future generations to come. Of the overwhelming number of chemicals in products on the market today – some 80,000 – only a handful have been banned from use by the EPA. Yet a growing number of studies suggest that many other chemicals found in common household products may pose serious threats to health.

Current laws leave consumers completely on their own to determine which chemical-laden products, including household and cleaning products, cosmetics and toys, are safe enough to bring into the home. The bills introduced today would aid Connecticut residents: by identifying a priority list of chemicals that pose risk to children's health; by banning targeted chemicals in products used by children; by fostering green technology and jobs; and by paving the way for employers to provide workers with safe non-toxic places to work.

My education in health risks posed by toxic chemicals found in common household products is the result of an odyssey rather than a crash course. It started many years ago with a casual exchange of tips between moms in the parking lot at my children's school. Growing hungry for more information, I began to conduct independent research for answers to questions about toxin-free products. When I learned that my son has a form of ADHD, my quest broadened even further as I tried to sort through the morass of available but often conflicting information. Finally, a few years ago I began working with the Mount Sinai Children's Environmental Health Center (CEHC), an organization that studies links between toxins in the environment and children's diseases such as cancers, asthma, autism, ADHD, Type 2 diabetes and obesity.

My connection to CEHC exposes me to the most recent information on the possible effects of certain chemicals on children's health. It teaches me that the most vulnerable beings are the tiniest ones, especially those yet to be born. Study after

study suggests that exposure of certain chemicals *in utero* through a pregnant mother during vital developmental stages can have devastating and life-lasting results to a child. No child in this country is born entirely free of toxins. Indeed, one national study overseen by the Environmental Working Group, a well-regarded 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, detected more than 200 potentially toxic substances in the blood of newborns. Second to preborn babies are the risks posed to young babies whose brains are continuing to develop and whose small bodies cannot process toxins as efficiently as can those of adults.

CEHC empowers me with knowledge. It offers me the choice to take a "better-safe-than-sorry" approach when purchasing consumer goods. In this way, it gives me a clear advantage over many other Connecticut residents. But it is an advantage I feel all parents state-wide are entitled to have.

Passage of **HB 5130**, An Act Concerning Child Safe Products, would eliminate this knowledge gap and take the guesswork out of a parent's safe consumer choices. No longer would well-intentioned parents expose children to products they believe to be safe, only to learn down the road that the products in fact contained chemicals that potentially pose serious health risks.

The enactment of a phase-out of Bisphenol-A in children's products last year positioned Connecticut as a national leader in this field. The comprehensive approach envisioned in **HB 5130** is the logical next step. It would secure the state's leadership role and, more importantly, ensure that all parents can provide their children with the safest choices on the market.

With the phase-out in this state and general concern nation-wide over exposures to Bisphenol-A, we have already witnessed an explosion of alternative products coming to market. Likewise, the European Union's upcoming phase-out of hundreds of other chemicals of high concern is certain to spawn the demand for and production of more alternative products in the global marketplace. **HB 5126**, An Act Establishing a Chemical Innovations Institute at the University of Connecticut, would enable this state to compete in the new "green" marketplace, and at the same time, create needed jobs and safe workplaces for its residents.

I am grateful to the Environment Committee and would like to thank each member for his or her leadership in this area. Please make passing **HB 5126** and **HB 5130** a priority this legislative session.

Sincerely,

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